

FINAL

**2021 AND 2022 ANNUAL
REPORTS**

OF THE

**ONEIDA COMMUNITY
CATS COMMITTEE**



ONEIDA IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE

ONEIDA, NEW YORK

APRIL 2023



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INTRODUCTION

This report describes the activities of the Oneida Community Cats Committee for the calendar years 2021 and 2022. The Oneida Community Cats Committee is a subcommittee of the Oneida Improvement Committee (OIC). The OIC was first incorporated in 1992 as a 501(c)(4) tax-exempt social welfare organization and was reorganized in 2012 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization for the purpose of improving the lives of City of Oneida residents. The Oneida Community Cats Committee is an all-volunteer group comprised of local residents who came together because of their mutual interest in finding a way to address the feral cat problem in the City of Oneida.

2021 ACTIVITIES

The committee formed in the summer of 2021 and primarily performed organizational tasks. Meetings were held monthly at the Oneida Public Library. Approximately a dozen people attended committee meetings. This section contains a brief description of committee activities in 2021.

Fact-Finding Research

The committee members conducted fact-finding research on best practices pertaining to community cat control, trapping practices, and program priorities from groups and successful programs in other cities. The research was conducted via internet search, consultation with pertinent professional organizations, and by talking to others who have been engaged in similar work. The committee members discussed the relationship they thought would be the most productive for the committee to have with the public and with those people who feed and care for community cat colonies. The discussions recognized that different people have different views about community cats, and the need to operate in a cooperative manner that respects these different views.

The committee members found that a trap/neuter/return (TNR) program is widely considered to be the most humane and effective way to manage feral cat populations. The following description of the benefits of TNR and how it works is from the fact sheet, "Why Trap-Neuter-Return Feral Cats? The Case for TNR" by Alley Cat Allies in Bethesda, Maryland:

“Trap-Neuter-Return is the humane and effective approach for stray and feral cats. Now in practice for decades in the US after being proven in Europe, scientific studies show that Trap-Neuter-Return improves the lives of feral cats, improves their relationships with the people who live near them, and decreases the size of colonies over time.

“Cats are humanely trapped and taken to a veterinarian to be neutered and vaccinated. After recovery, the cats are returned to their home—their colony—outdoors. Kittens and cats who are friendly and socialized to people may be adopted into homes. Grounded in science, TNR stops the breeding cycle of cats and therefore improves their lives while preventing reproduction.

“Attempts to remove cats from an area always fail because of a natural and scientifically-documented phenomenon known as the vacuum effect. In basic terms, whenever cats are removed, new cats move in, or the surviving cats left behind breed to capacity.”

Mission and Goals

The committee members decided upon the following mission and goals:

Mission: The mission of the Oneida Community Cats Committee is to work with compassionate individuals, local governments, and other volunteers/community members to achieve population decline of the unaltered, free-roaming, feral, and/or abandoned domestic cats in our area through education and the use of a Trap/Neuter/Return (TNR) program.

Goals:

1. Aid in the community education and definition of what a “community cat” is. “Community Cats” is a term used to describe outdoor, unowned, free-roaming cats. These cats can be friendly, feral, adults, kittens, healthy, sick, altered and/or unaltered.
2. Assist in creating a long-term community commitment to, and achievement of the reduction of the local free-roaming “community cat” population.
3. Reduction of the occurrence of nuisance behaviors associated with mating, including spraying, yowling, and fighting so that people and cats can live in harmony.
4. Assist in the improvement of quality of life for homeless cats and kittens by creating an identification system to rate whether or not kittens or altered cats can be adopted, and coordinate with local fostering and adoption programs to support adoption.
5. Promote the humane treatment, and community understanding that “community cats” are victims of circumstance, deserve care and kindness, and provide a valuable public service in rodent control.

6. Support education and encouragement of participation from community members, other animal support groups, veterinarians, and local government so that there is a clear understanding of the success that can be achieved through the operation of a strong Trap/Neuter/Return program.
7. Find ways to financially support a successful TNR Program by gaining financial support in the form of fundraisers, grants and contribution/support from local governments.
8. Work with local governments to provide education, research and data to assist in the prevention of future generations of "community cats".

In addition, the committee decided that every cat brought to a veterinarian for spay/neuter would also be given a rabies shot. Community cats are a possible reservoir for the rabies virus.

Public Communication

Several tasks were completed for public communication. The committee set up a Facebook page ("Oneida Community Cats Committee") and set up a page on the OIC website. Communication with the public is currently primarily through the Facebook page.

Planning

Committee members reached out to local veterinary businesses to find out the best way to coordinate spay/neuter appointments. Village Veterinary Hospital of Canastota, New York offered to perform the services at reduced rates as a way of supporting the mission of the committee.

Fundraising, Equipment Procurement, and TNR

The committee conducted the following fundraising, equipment procurement, and TNR activities in 2021.

Fundraising:

- The City of Oneida allocated \$1,000 to the committee, to be used to reimburse veterinary bills in 2021. Of this amount, \$259.00 was spent, and the remainder was forfeited at the end of the year.
- Private donations totaling \$281.00 were received.

Equipment procurement:

- Humane cat traps were procured. Some were donated to the committee by local businesses and residents, and some were purchased (\$113.25).

TNR activities:

- Two cats (1 male, 1 female) were trapped, brought to a veterinarian, spayed/neutered, given rabies shots, returned to the trapping location, and released.
- Three kittens were caught by hand in November 2021. They were too young to be spayed/neutered, so they were surrendered to a local kitten/cat rescue organization.

2022 ACTIVITIES

The committee continued activities throughout 2022 and primarily conducted fundraising and TNR. Meetings were held monthly at the Oneida Public Library. Approximately a dozen people attended committee meetings. This section contains a brief description of committee activities in 2022.

Fundraising

Funding for the committee in 2022 came from the following sources:

- City of Oneida: \$1,000.00
- Oneida Police Benevolent Association: \$500.00
- Members of the public and private businesses: \$1,425.00
- Bottle and can return: \$201.65
- Total: \$3,126.65

TNR Activities

The committee conducted TNR activities from June through December 2022. The committee pursued a strategy of focusing on one or two adjacent colonies at a time, in order to reach as high a percentage of spayed/neutered cats as possible in that colony and minimize the extent to which unspayed/unneutered cats would have kittens and regenerate the colony. Once it appeared that all the cats in the target colony(ies) had been spayed/neutered because no new cats were being trapped, the committee began TNR activities in an adjacent colony.

Before conducting any TNR activities in a location, committee members reached out to the residents and neighbors at that location to explain the activities and get permission from the property owner to place traps. Any cats that were caught whose behavior suggested that they were outdoor pets and not feral were immediately released without taking them to the veterinarian. All cats that were caught whose behavior suggested that they were feral were transported to a veterinarian, spayed or neutered and given a rabies shot, and had their ear tipped for identification purposes. The adult feral cats were returned to the trapping location and released. Some of the feral kittens had behavior that suggested they could be socialized to people; after being spayed/neutered, these kittens were connected with a local rescue organization or private individual to foster until a permanent home was found.

The following table provides further details for TNR activities in 2022:

Colony	Females Spayed	Males Neutered	Total Cats TNRed	Estimated Colony Size*	% of Colony TNRed
A	6	3	9	13	69%
B	4	2	6	8	75%
C	4	4	8	11	73%
D	1	0	1	Unknown	Unknown
Total	15	9	24	--	--

* Estimated number of community cats in the colony in early summer 2022, before TNR activities began. Colony size fluctuates as kittens are born and cats are removed by adoption or becoming deceased. In colonies where TNR activities were conducted, no new kittens were born in 2022.

Total expenditures in 2022 were \$2,551.68. All expenditures in 2022 were for veterinary services (spays, neuters, and rabies shots).

Colony Survey

The committee conducted a public survey in October and November 2022 to take a census of community cat colonies in the city. The goal was to improve knowledge of the numbers and locations of local cat colonies, to support creation of a multi-year plan for obtaining funds and allocating resources to where they are needed most. The survey was advertised via a press release in the Oneida Dispatch and a Facebook post on the Oneida Community Cats Committee Facebook page. The public could fill out the form anonymously, and all personally identifiable details are being kept confidential.

The results of the survey were that **there are 17 community cat colonies in the City of Oneida, with a total of approximately 135 cats**. This is a minimum estimate, as there may be additional colonies that were not reported in the survey. The numbers are subject to change as the colony population fluctuates as kittens are born and cats are adopted or become deceased.

Public Communication

The committee engaged in communication with the public including speaking at Oneida Common Council meetings and providing interviews for newspaper articles.

Record-Keeping

All veterinary invoices are retained by the committee and tracked in a spreadsheet. For veterinary expenses reimbursed by the City of Oneida, the invoice/receipt is submitted to the City of Oneida to obtain reimbursement. All finances (donations and payments) are handled by the OIC through their accounts.

FUTURE WORK IN 2023

The committee is continuing activities in 2023. The committee continues to meet monthly at the Oneida Public Library. The main areas of focus in 2023 are to continue TNR activities and fundraising activities. The committee is also developing relationships with additional veterinary service providers to increase the number of TNRs that can be performed. Because fundraising exceeded expenditures in 2022, a balance is left over to kickstart TNR activities in 2023. Additionally, the City of Oneida allocated \$1,000 for the committee in the 2023 budget. The committee is continuing to gather information about the number of colonies and cats in each colony in the City of Oneida. The committee may also begin efforts to educate the community on the importance of spaying/neutering pet cats, and explore the possibility of bringing a low-cost cat spay/neuter clinic to Oneida for residents to obtain low-cost spays/neuters of their pet cats.